

TWENTY-SECOND SEASON
SECOND CONCERT

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PRESENT THE

A silhouette illustration of four musicians in period dress, seated and playing instruments. The text "Folger Consort" is superimposed over the illustration.

Folger Consort

Robert Eisenstein — vielle, rebec, recorder
Christopher Kendall — lute, mandora, harp
Scott Reiss — recorders, psaltery, percussion
Ann Monoylos — soprano, hurdy-gurdy

Hamman Hall

**Monday, November 30, 1981
8:00 P.M.**

Rice University

PROGRAM

Songs of the Troubadours and Trouveres

Reis Glorios. Giraut de Bornelh (fl. 1165-1211)
 A douz mois de Mai joli. Anonymous 13th centry trouvere
 Fortz chausa es. Gaucelm Faidit
 (Planh on the death of Richard I)
 Estampita (inst.). Anonymous

Estat ai en greu cossirier. The Countess of Die
 Dex est ausi comme li pellican. Thibaut, Roi de Navarre (1201-1253)
 Benedicamus Domino (inst.). Anonymous Las Huelgas Codex
 Kalenda Maya. Raimbaut de Vaqueras (fl. 1180-1205)

Intermission

Medieval English Christmas Music

Sub Arthuro plebs (inst.). John Alyn
 Angelus ad Virginem. Anonymous (circa 1250)
 Excelsus in numine (inst.). Anonymous (13th century)
 There is no rose. Anonymous carol (15th century)
 Ave rex angelorum (inst.). Anonymous (15th century)
 Nowell sing we. Anonymous (15th century)

Fourteenth Century Italian Christmas Laude and Dances

Stella nuova. Anonymous
 Istampita Belicha (inst.). Anonymous
 Da ciel venne messo novello. Anonymous
 La manfredina (inst.). Anonymous
 Gloria'n cielo e pace'n terra. Anonymous

THE FOLGER CONSORT is in residence at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.

Photographing and sound recording are prohibited.
 We further request that audible paging devices not be used during performances.
 Paging arrangements may be made with ushers.

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HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC TWENTY-SECOND SEASON

HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC/SHEPHERD SCHOOL OF MUSIC FIFTH SEASON

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 November 30, 1981. FOLGER CONSORT
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PROGRAM NOTES

Songs of the Troubadours and Trouveres

The troubadours were aristocratic poet-musicians of the twelfth and early thirteenth century southern France. By using the indigenous musical traditions of the South with the new cult of chivalric love, the troubadours and their northern French imitators, the trouveres, founded the tradition of courtly love songs which flourished throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The word *troubadour* comes from the Provencal *trobar*, "to find," implying that the tradition was one of improvisation, with the poet "finding" the words to his poem as he sang. The noble artist, however, was not necessarily expected to perform his own work and had the services of jongleurs, professional performers of low station, to assist in serenading courtly gatherings, friends, and unattainable objects of desire. What these performances were really like is debatable. The surviving manuscripts are not performance editions, but rather presentation copies that in all likelihood served ceremonial rather than musical purposes. These lavish manuscripts contain only the texts and the pitches of the songs, leaving rhythmic interpretation to the modern transcriber. There are scholars who feel that there is no justification for anything other than a simple vocal performance of these pieces. However, given the known presence of instrumental performers with an unwritten and improvisational tradition and the almost certain influence of Arab musical culture in medieval southern France, it is possible to make a case for the kind of performance heard here. As modern day jongleurs, we certainly prefer to present the latter approach.

Medieval English Christmas Music

It is unfortunate that so little medieval English polyphony survives today. Due to the wholesale destruction of all things Catholic during and after the reign of Henry VIII and to the natural ravages of time, only a small fraction of the repertory remains for us to enjoy today. *Sub Arturo plebs* is a work about English music and musicians, yet it survives only in a continental manuscript. *Angelus ad Virginem* is mentioned by Chaucer; he has his young clerk singing it to the accompaniment of a psaltery in the "Miller's Tale". *Excelsus in numine* is a motet in honor of St. Thomas. These three pieces are delightful examples of the fresh and energetic sound of early English polyphony. The remaining works in this group are 15th century carols. To reach the largely illiterate masses, the church had to use every possible attraction. Important feasts, especially

Christmas, were made as elaborate and eye-catching as possible, with colorful processions and much music to ornament the liturgy. The first carols have their origins here. Their basic purpose was to involve the people in the Church through instructive texts, beautiful melodies, and 'danceable' rhythms. The anonymous composers of these carols certainly must have achieved their aims; the simple, warm beauty and lively motion of these songs perfectly capture a Christmas spirit that has not changed since the 15th century.

Fourteenth Century Italian Christmas Laude and Dances

The *laude* performed here are popular, folklike songs which may have been used in street processions. Melodically, these pieces seem to reveal the influence of the troubadours, Gregorian chant, and perhaps folksong. Culturally, the *laude* were used (if not written) by the wandering groups of penitents which arose because of the devastating wars and plagues between 1250 and 1350. These people sought to atone for the sins of the world by flagellating themselves as well as by singing *laude*. Our examples are definitely written for Christmas celebrations, so we need not imagine tortuous original performances. *Belicha* and *Manfredina* are two of the unique instrumental pieces preserved solely in a manuscript now in the British Museum. They are called *istampitas*, literally stomping dances; but it is doubtful that they were intended to be danced. Boccaccio describes a group of Florentine nobles sitting and listening to one, and this makes sense in terms of the music. The single melody lines preserved in the source are frameworks for virtuoso performance by the players.

Program notes by Robert Eisenstein

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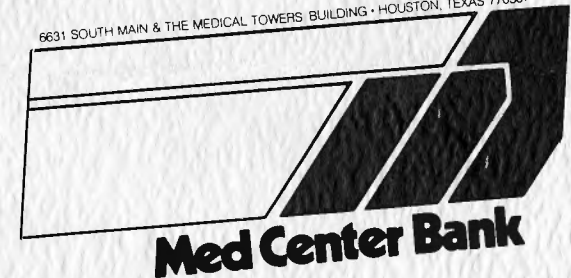
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